



Elementary, Middle, and High School Counselors

Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations

District Leadership Forum

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1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Compared with a decade ago, school counselors at profiled districts now hold more responsibilities for student mental health and personal development.

Contacts note that students in their districts require greater mental health support to succeed in school compared to years past. As student mental health, social-emotional, and behavioral needs expand, administrators at profiled districts increasingly rely on school counselors to serve as a comprehensive student wellness resource.

Most profiled districts exceed the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) National Model recommended ratio of one counselor for every 250 students. The median district in the United States provided one counselor for every 370 students. Districts profiled in this report employ more counselors than the national average, with on average one counselor for every 288 students.

The responsibilities of elementary school counselors vary across profiled districts. School counselors at two profiled districts teach classes to students on guidance topics. In **District E**, elementary school counselors spend most of their time working with students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). However, despite the variance in roles and responsibilities, elementary school counselors at all profiled districts primarily provide social-emotional and behavioral support to students.

Middle school counselors focus mostly on academic, career, and behavioral support. Counselors frequently help students address issues from home or social media, as well as other student needs that could inhibit learning and success if left unresolved. As middle school students approach high school, counselors also work with students on academic and career planning.

High school counselors spend most of their time providing students with academic, college, and career guidance. Counselors work with students to help plan their class schedules, address academic performance, discuss career interests, review resumes, and prepare for college. High school counselors also provide social-emotional and mental health counseling to students, but less frequently than middle school and elementary school counselors.

Principals manage school counselors, but district administrators help organize and coordinate school counseling programs. Three profiled districts feature district-level administrators who oversee and coordinate school counseling services. These administrators help organize professional development, standardize database processes, and facilitate communication between school counselors across the district. School principals directly oversee and manage the school counselors working in their buildings.

2) Changing Roles of School Counselors

Student Trends

Students Today Exhibit Greater Need for Mental Health Support

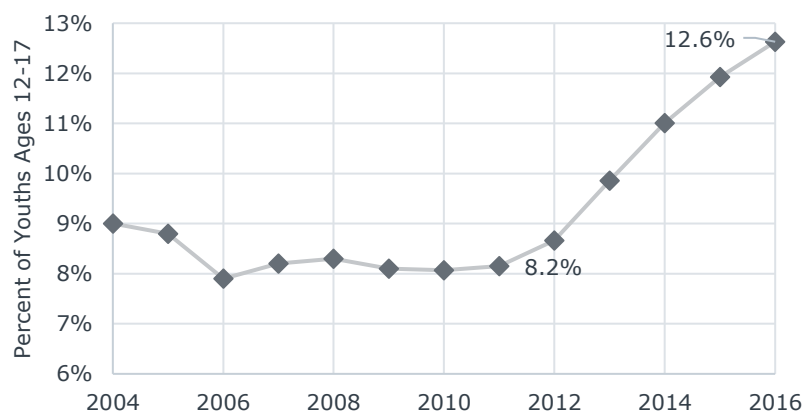
Contacts at **District A**, **District B**, and **District C** note that students in their districts require greater mental health support to succeed in school compared to years past. Counselors at District B report that over the past decade, an increasing number of students have displayed signs of depression and anxiety.

National surveys also record a greater incidence of depression among teenagers. The percentage of youths between ages 12 and 17 who experienced a major depressive episode in the past year increased from 8.2 percent in 2012 to 12.6 percent in 2016.

School counselors in profiled districts play a primary role in identifying and supporting students with mental health and social-emotional needs.

Percent of Youths Ages 12-17 Experiencing a Major Depressive Episode in the Past Year

National Survey on Drug Use and Health – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



Many Factors Contribute to Greater Student Need

Contacts cite many environmental and social factors as potential explanations for the increasing student need they observe in their districts. Counselors at **District A** explain that the district's students increasingly come from families with one or no parents. Family-related issues have consequently become more challenging and severe. In recent years, counselors have more frequently supported students involved in referrals from Child Protective Services or in foster care.

Data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) indicates that reported victims of child maltreatment in the state of Wyoming rose 35 percent between 2012 and 2016¹. In 2016, the rate of child maltreatment in Wyoming was 7.0 for every 1000 children. This figure is lower than the national average of 9.1 per 1000 children.

1) Administration on Children, Youth and Families. 2018. "Child Maltreatment 2016." Children's Bureau. February 1. Accessed March 16, 2018. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>.

School Counselors Help Address Increased Student Needs

As student mental health, social-emotional, and behavioral needs expand, administrators at profiled districts have increasingly relied upon school counselors to assist in new ways. Contacts at **District C** explain that the role of a school counselor has changed significantly over the past couple decades. Counselors a decade ago focused primarily on class schedules, graduation requirements, and post-graduation plans. School counselors now spend more time inside and outside of the classroom getting to know students. Partially because of this greater familiarity, students feel more willing to seek out their school counselors for help across a diverse range of topics and issues.

The Changing Role of School Counselors



From Academic Advisor

Contacts at profiled districts explain that in the past, school counselors infrequently engaged with teachers and students outside of advising activities. Counselors focused mostly on academic, college, and career planning.

To Wellness Resource

Counselors at profiled districts now spend more time with students. Working with students on social-emotional and behavioral issues represents a greater proportion of a counselor's responsibilities.

Social Media and Digital Lifestyles Increasingly a Cause of Issues Referred to School Counselors

Contacts note that social media and the prevalence of smartphones impact student welfare and the need for more robust school counseling services. Counselors at **District A** explain that the constant social interaction and anonymity smartphones can provide seems to exacerbate social-emotional issues. Digital interactions now represent the most prevalent source of issues that require intervention by school counselors.

While most social media interactions do not occur at school, contacts explain that these issues frequently enter the classroom and become distractions. With social media and smartphones, social interactions with classmates become a 24/7 experience for students.

Digital Interactions that May Require School Counselor Intervention

Negative or Unwanted Social Media Commentary



Students may face harassment or bullying by classmates and strangers on social media platforms. These posts can occur on familiar sites like Facebook and Twitter but also on newer applications like Musical.ly. School officials, including counselors, help mediate disputes between students and offer guidance to students harassed over social media.

Hate-filled Anonymous Messages



Applications like Sarahah and Whisper allow users to post messages and receive comments anonymously. The anonymity provided by these applications can foster hateful comments and negative interactions. Counselors note that these messages can have a strong impact on younger students.

Concerning Social Media Posts



As social media usage becomes more widespread among adults, school counselors more frequently receive referrals from community members concerned about a student's posts on social media. These may include posts or comments that seem to indicate suicidal behavior. Community referrals over social media may help catch concerning behavior and often increase school counselor caseloads.

School Counselor Ratios

Profiled Districts Employ More School Counselors than the National Average

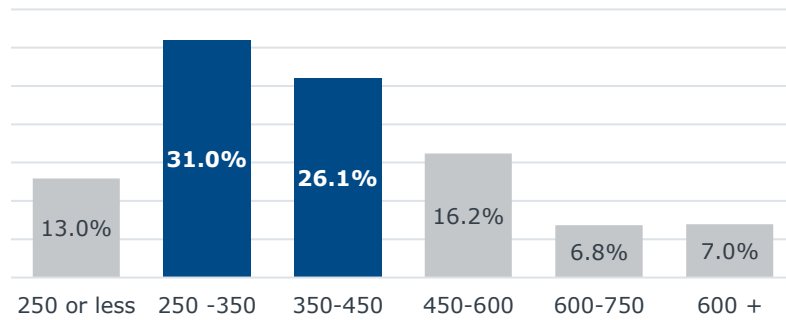
Profiled districts on average employ one school counselor for every 288 students. This ratio exceeds the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommendation of one school counselor for every 250 students.² However, only 13 percent of school districts in the US employ enough school counselors to meet this ratio. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics Elementary/Secondary Information System (EISI) indicates that 31 percent of districts feature student to counselor ratios of between 250 and 350. The median district in the United States provides one counselor for every 370 students.

2) American School Counselor Association. 2017. "Student-to-School-Counselor Ratio 2014-2015." *American School Counselor Association*. Accessed March 20, 2018. https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/home/Ratios14-15_1.pdf.

School Counselor Ratios by District

National Center for Education Statistics Elementary/Secondary Information System (EISI) 2014-2015

Most U.S. school districts employ one school counselor per 250-450 students.



Most Profiled Districts Provide More Counselors per Student in High School than in Primary Grades

Profiled districts on average employ one high school counselor for every 234 high school students and one school counselor for every 371 students in grades K-8. Excluding outliers from this calculation can explain some of this difference. When excluding **District B's** K-8 ratio of 1:768 from the calculations, the average number of students per counselor at the remaining profiled districts falls to one for every 272 students. Contacts note that high school counselors provide more individualized student planning assistance compared to counselors in grades K-8 which may help explain this difference.

School Counselor Ratios at Profiled Districts by Level

National Center for Education Statistics Elementary/Secondary Information System (EISI) 2014-2015 & District Provided Data

	Level	Enrolled	Counselors	School Counselor Ratio
District A	9-12	~ 370	2	1:186
	K-8	~ 830	3	1:275
District B	9-12	~ 1,800	8	1:225
	K-8	~ 3,100	4	1:768
District C	9-12	~ 1,200	4	1:303
	K-8	~ 2,200	8	1:280
District D	9-12	~ 700	3	1:231
	K-8	~ 1,800	7	1:262
District E	9-12	~ 800	3.5	1:227
	K-8	~ 1,800	6.5	1:270

3) Elementary School Counselors

Counselor Roles **Responsibilities of Elementary School Counselors Include Social-Emotional and Behavioral Supports, but Vary Across Profiled Districts**

Elementary school counselors, and to a somewhat lesser extent, middle school counselors, do not fill a standardized role across profiled districts. At **District A** and **District C**, school counselors teach classes to students on guidance topics. Elementary school counselors in **District E** spend most of their time working with students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Despite the variance in roles and responsibilities, elementary school counselors at profiled districts primarily provide social-emotional and behavioral support to students. Counselors devote most of their time to direct classroom instruction or counseling work with large groups of students. This work primarily focuses on social-emotional and behavioral support.

Elementary School Counselors Provide Comprehensive Counseling Support

Although the roles and responsibilities of school counselors vary, the tasks that counselors perform regularly fall into four categories. These are responsive services, direct instruction, student planning assistance, and administrative support.

Common Tasks of Elementary School Counselors

Responsive Services



Responsive services include scheduled group or one-on-one counseling and other interventions for students pre-identified by behavioral screening or referrals. Responsive services also include counseling assistance provided during unplanned student visits and responding to student crises.

Direct Instruction



Elementary school counselors at two profiled schools provide direct instruction to students. These counselors teach a class to students that covers social-emotional learning topics. In some profiled districts, counselors develop lessons for teachers to present on school counseling topics (e.g., bullying).

Student Planning Assistance



Student planning assistance includes academic, college, and career-planning support provided to individual students. At the elementary school level, this includes basic discussions about careers and college and helping students with study skills.

Administrative Support



Administrative support tasks include meetings, working with teachers, and completing paperwork. School counselors also work closely with the school principal to track student wellness and coordinate interventions.

School counselors at profiled districts address student issues that span academic, social-emotional, behavioral, and mental health topics, and do not focus exclusively on one area. At **District A** elementary school counselors hold licenses as mental health counselors. These counselors note that they feel most comfortable providing mental health assistance or social-emotional counseling, and are less experienced addressing student behavioral concerns. Even so, when students experience behavioral issues that disrupt class, teachers most often refer these students to the school counselor. Counselors do not specialize in one type of support but instead provide counseling services for most student issues. In severe cases, school counselors refer students to community mental health clinics or other pertinent specialized services.



Flexible Assignment of Responsibilities at *District D*

Counseling models at **District D** allow school administrators flexibility when assigning school counselor responsibilities. District-wide models detail the processes and systems used to support students and provide behavioral interventions but avoid assigning individuals to specific roles within the process. District administrators work with each school to pair staff members, including counselors, with responsibilities within the framework. This flexibility helps generate buy-in from school administrators, school counselors, and other involved staff. This flexibility also causes the roles of school counselors to vary across the district. For example, in some district schools, school counselors hold responsibility for tasks that other schools assign to school psychologists.

School Counselors at *District A* Track Time Allocation Statistics

School counselors at **District A** track the time they spend performing different functions of their role to monitor performance and demonstrate their activities. Each year, counselors share these statistics with the school principal as a part of performance reviews. Tracking time allocation helps principals and school counselors better communicate expectations and manage responsibilities.

Time Allocation of Elementary School Counselors at *District A*

Responsive Services ~ 45 Percent



Counselors spend about 45 percent of their time providing responsive services. These services include individual counseling, group counseling, and crisis support. Counselors meet regularly with students who have IEPs to help fulfill their education programs. Counselors also provide responsive services to students as part of planned interventions and unplanned visits by students seeking help.

Direct Instruction ~ 26 Percent



Counselors spend about 26 percent of their time providing direct instruction on guidance topics (e.g., interpersonal skills, decision-making, safety). Counselors select guidance class topics based on American School Counseling Association (ASCA) National Model Standards. Elementary school students attend guidance class once a week as an enrichment class. The guidance class falls into the same schedule as other once-weekly courses like physical education (P.E.), music, art, and library classes.

Administrative Support ~ 25 Percent



School counselors spend about 25 percent of their time on administrative tasks. This proportion slightly exceeds the recommendation of the ASCA National Model that administrative responsibilities take up 20 percent or less of a counselor's time.³ These tasks include data collection and assessment, meetings with teachers and school administrators, and professional development.

Student Planning Assistance ~ 4 Percent



At the elementary school level, counselors spend very little time helping students with academic planning. Counselors may infrequently assist students with grades, classes, and homework. Students in elementary school do not receive personalized career or college guidance, but counselors do discuss these topics in regular guidance classes.

3) American School Counselor Association. 2018. "ASCA National Model." *American School Counselor Association*. Accessed March 28, 2018. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors-members/asca-national-model>.

Direct Counseling Instruction

Elementary School Counselors Provide Direct Classroom Instruction at Two Profiled Districts

Elementary school counselors at **District A** and **District C** teach a class for all students in grades K-5. Elementary school students in District C attend guidance class once every six school days for 30 minutes. Counselors structure the curriculum according to ASCA National Model Standards and present lessons tailored to each age group. Lesson topics include decision-making, acquiring self-knowledge, and safety. These classes serve as the main connection between counselors and most elementary students in the district.

Similarly to District C, elementary school counselors at District A also develop lessons for students based on ASCA standards. Counselors note that weekly contact with students provides important benefits that go beyond the guidance curriculum. Guidance classes provide a useful venue for school counselors to regularly interact with every student. This regular contact helps counselors identify students in need earlier and helps students connect with school counselors. This familiarity also increases the likelihood that students will seek out a counselor for help if needed.

See **Appendix A.** for a counseling class standard template from **District C**

Guidance Class Curriculum Progression at *District C*

ASCA Model Standard	Decision-Making 	Acquiring Self-Knowledge 	Safety 
K-2 Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding Choices • Making Choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindness and Caring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Danger? • Staying Safe
3-5 Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with Conflict • Learning to Compromise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing Respect • Identifying a Bully • Understanding Others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Appropriate and Inappropriate • Who to Seek for Help

Elementary School Counselors at *District D* Primarily Provide Responsive Services

Contacts at **District D** estimate that elementary school counselors spend about 35 percent of their time providing counseling support to pre-identified students as part of planned behavioral or social-emotional interventions. Counselors help identify students in need, monitor their progress, provide interventions, and evaluate efficacy within these processes.

Counselors at District D spend an additional 45 percent of their time providing counseling services for unplanned student visits and classroom support services. These classroom support services help address disruptive student behaviors within a classroom setting. By modeling interventions in the classroom, counselors can remedy classroom issues and provide teachers with strategies to prevent further disruption in the future.

School Counselor Classroom Support Process at *District D*



Identify Classrooms in Need of Intervention

A high number of behavioral referrals from one classroom may signal a need for group counseling within a classroom environment. Counselors identify these classrooms through communication with classroom teachers and evaluation of behavioral referral data.



Implement Counselor-led, In-Class Interventions

Once teachers and counselors identify classrooms in need of interventions, a counselor will partner with the classroom teacher to implement social-emotional learning or behavioral interventions in the classroom. For example, a counselor might facilitate restorative or community-building circles to surface and address student issues (e.g., student disputes, students who feel socially excluded).



Transition Counseling Interventions to Classroom Teachers

The long-term goal of classroom interventions in **District D's** elementary schools is to equip teachers with social-emotional and behavioral practices. Counselors lead initial interventions but transition responsibility for subsequent interventions to classroom teachers. Counselors remain present to provide assistance and coaching until classroom teachers feel comfortable implementing these practices independently.

For more information on student mental health support, consider EAB's report: **Serving Students with Mental Health Concerns** available on EAB's website.

4) Middle School Counselors

Counselor Roles

Middle School Counselors Focus on Academic, Career, and Behavioral Issues

Compared to elementary school counselors at profiled districts, middle school counselors spend less time providing direct guidance instruction and more time providing students with individualized academic and career planning assistance. When addressing behavioral and/or academic issues, counselors at **District A** approach problems from the perspective of a student's future college or career opportunity to illustrate the potential impact of a student's choices on their future.

Time Allocation of Middle School Counselors in *District A*

Responsive Services ~ 50 Percent



Middle school counselors spend the majority of their time providing responsive services. Counselors help students address issues that arise from interactions at home or on social media, as well as other student needs that could inhibit learning and success. Contacts emphasize that counselors spend much of their time dealing with student crisis. These crises can include serious mental health concerns or Child Protective Service referrals. Responsive services also include regularly scheduled counseling with students on IEPs.

Administrative Support ~ 25 Percent



Many of middle school counselor's administrative support tasks mirror those for elementary school counselors. However, middle school counselors do spend more time providing administrative support for academic interventions. These tasks include tracking students who have failed to turn in assignments and identifying students with downward trending grades.

Student Planning Assistance ~ 20 Percent



Middle school counselors spend more time compared to elementary school counselors helping students with academic and career planning. These tasks include working with students who fail to turn in homework assignments, counseling students on study strategies, supervising after-school homework sessions, and coordinating educational speakers.

Direct Instruction ~ 5 Percent



Middle school counselors do not provide direct instruction to all students each week but instead teach students periodically throughout the year. Counselors present to students three to four times per semester during regularly scheduled P.E. and health classes. Counselors provide instruction on grade-specific topics that include digital safety, drug abuse, and career interests.

Because middle school counselors do not regularly provide direct instruction to all students, they frequently supervise the lunchroom and common areas before and after school to interact with students.

Middle School Counselors at *District C* Primarily Offer Responsive Services

Middle school counselors at **District C** spend most of their time serving students referred by teachers and the principal's office. Contacts explain that responsive services and behavior referrals take up about 60 percent of a counselor's time. Behavioral issues represent most of the student referrals middle school counselors receive. In the district, middle school students referred to the principal's office for behavioral issues first meet with school counselors and go through counselor-led mediation. If issues cannot be resolved through mediation, counselors may refer the student to the school's dean of students for further consideration.

Middle School Counselors at *District C* Provide Some Direct Student Instruction

Unlike their elementary school colleagues, middle school counselors at **District C** do not provide regularly scheduled instruction to all students. Instead, counselors develop mini-lessons for sixth- and seventh-grade homeroom teachers. Counselors design these mini-lessons around selected ASCA National Model Standards.

All eighth-grade students in District C take a quarter-long course taught by school counselors focused on career preparation and academic interests. This course helps prepare middle school students for high school.

Contacts estimate that both lesson planning obligations and the eighth-grade instruction require about 15 percent of a middle school counselor's time at District C.

Proactive Interventions

Climate Surveys Help Middle School Counselors Identify and Assist At-Risk Students

Students in middle school face many new and challenging academic, social, and psychological challenges as they progress from elementary school into high school. School counselors often help students address these challenges.

Counselors at **District A** conduct climate surveys with students to identify at-risk individuals. Counselors explain up front to students that it is important to provide their name on these surveys so that the counselor can follow up with students who are determined to be at risk. To minimize student privacy concerns, school counselors visit classrooms in person to conduct these surveys and immediately collect the survey responses as opposed to the teacher facilitating this process.

At-Risk Student Indicators Identified by Climate Surveys

- Students who lack an adult in the school with whom they feel comfortable talking
- Students who feel that other students are disrespectful to them
- Students who believe they are disrespectful to other students
- Students who do not feel emotionally safe at school
- Students who do not feel physically safe at school

Counselors follow up with students who respond with an at-risk indicator on the climate survey. Some of these students represent false-positives (e.g., a student who randomly marks answers) but many present genuine needs that school counselors can address.

School Counselors Help At-Risk Students Connect with Teachers

School counselors at **District A** help foster mentorship opportunities and connect at-risk students with teachers or other adults in the district. Counselors use survey data to help connect some students with teachers and potential role models.

Helping Students Build Relationships with Adult Role Models in *District A*



Processing Climate Survey Results

Counselors administer climate surveys that ask students questions about adults they trust in the school. Counselors identify students who lack an adult in the district they feel comfortable talking to using these responses.



Counselors Share Lists of Identified Students with Relevant Teachers

Counselors develop a list of students who lack a trusted adult in the school and share this list with individuals who routinely interact with that student. This may include students' classroom teachers, coaches, and activity leaders.



Teachers Focus on Connecting with Identified Students

Teachers identify students to reach out to based on the existing interactions they have with these at-risk students. Ideally, a teacher would have a student in multiple classes they teach or participating in sports or activities they coach. Teachers update the counselor about these students and follow up regarding that student's progress.

For more information on fostering mentor relationships with students, consider EAB's report: **Mentorship Programs for Middle and High School Students** available on EAB's website.

5) High School Counselors

Counselor Roles

High School Counselors Primarily Provide Academic, College, and Career Guidance

Compared to elementary and middle school counselors, high school counselors perform roles and responsibilities that are more uniform across profiled districts. Across all profiled districts, high school counselors spend most of their time providing students with academic, college, and career guidance. Counselors do not provide direct instruction for high school students but may develop short lesson plans for homeroom teachers to present.

High school counselors at **District B** meet with students they advise about three times a semester but not always individually. Counselors at the district meet with students in both small and large group settings. In these meetings, counselors work with students to help plan their schedules, discuss career interests, and prepare for college.

Counselors at **District A** spend more than half of their time working with students on individualized academic, college, and career planning. School counselors help students apply for colleges and provide resume writing assistance. **District C** structures high school counselor tasks similarly, with individual student planning tasks representing about half of a counselor's total time.

Time Allocation of High School Counselors in *District A*

Student Planning Assistance ~ 60 Percent



High school counselors primarily provide academic, college, and career-planning support to students. These responsibilities include course scheduling, career readiness, preparation for standardized college entrance examinations, and management of scholarships.

Responsive Services ~ 30 Percent



Responsive services represent the second largest responsibility for high school counselors. High school counselors focus more on mental health support partially because the principal or dean of students address most behavioral issues.

Administrative Support ~ 10 Percent



System support tasks comprise less time for high school counselors at **District A** compared with elementary or middle school counselors. Counselors still hold responsibility for a large amount of paperwork and administrative tasks, but many of these tasks are integral elements of the academic or college planning process (e.g., scholarship paperwork, coordinating college entrance examinations).

High School Counselors Provide Limited Responsive Services

Contacts at **District A**, **District B**, **District C**, and **District E** all note that high school counselors provide some social-emotional and/or mental health counseling as part of their responsibilities. However, counselors frequently refer students to more specialized school officials or outside entities (e.g., mental health clinics) in serious cases. When counselors at **District B** determine that a student requires specialized attention or dedicated mental health counseling services, they refer those students to the school social worker for further assistance.

When middle and high school students in **District A** require more intensive counseling services, school counselors work with community mental health service providers to connect students with the proper care. The district holds agreements with a regional mental health association to facilitate this process.

School counselors in **District C** spend approximately 25 percent of their time providing responsive services. These include both unplanned student visits and referrals from teachers or other school officials. Counselors also participate in meetings with other administrators to identify at-risk students and design interventions for them.

Some Districts Feature High School Counselors Who Specialize in Specific Areas

While high school guidance counselors in **District E** do provide some responsive services and social-emotional support, most students with social-emotional or behavioral referrals work with student services counselors in the high school. District E employs two student services counselors who work with students in the middle school and high school. These student services counselors specialize in serving students with IEPs, helping students address behavioral issues, and assisting students through legal proceedings (e.g., accompany students to court hearings).

In addition to the student services counselors, administrators at District E employ three guidance counselors in the high school, as well as a registrar and a scheduling technician. These guidance counselors spend most of their time providing academic, college, and career planning to individual students. One guidance counselor serves freshmen exclusively, helping students enroll in classes and assisting students with the transition from middle school to high school. The other two guidance counselors serve sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Although the registrar and scheduling technician are not school counselors, they provide administrative support for academic scheduling and course records that might otherwise become tasks for school counselors.

District E High School Counselor Staffing Structures



District Student Services Director



School Principal



Two Student Services Counselors

Student services counselors work with students who have behavioral issues and students who have IEPs. Counselors also assist students through legal issues or other crises. Student services counselors provide little academic planning support.



Three Guidance Counselors

Guidance counselors primarily provide academic, career, and college guidance. One counselor exclusively serves freshmen, while the other two serve students in grades 10-12.



One Registrar

The school registrar works in the counseling department but focuses exclusively on course scheduling and records. The registrar is not a school counselor.



One Scheduling Technician

The school scheduling technician designs class schedules for the school.

6) District-Wide Organization and Administration

School Counselor Organization

Profiled School Districts Use the ASCA National Model to Clarify the Roles and Responsibilities of Counselors

The ASCA National Model provides structure and guidance for K-12 school counselors. The model includes curriculum standards, templates for the relationship and roles held by administrators and school counselors, guidelines for time allocation, and advice for collecting and analyzing data.

School counseling programs at **District A** and **District C** use the ASCA National Model to organize school counseling services. In these districts, counselors base the curriculum for guidance classes on the ASCA National Model's curriculum standards. Counselors also structure their time roughly in accordance with the model's recommendations.

School counseling models at **District D** and **District E** use the ASCA National Model as a reference but deviate from the model in some areas. In District D, administrators explain that they are working to align their school counseling model more closely to the ASCA National Model. Currently, the role of school counselors in the district varies by school and the school principal decides most of these variations. The desire of individual school principals to customize student services in their buildings can complicate district-wide standardization efforts.

Benefits of the ASCA National Model for *District D*

Despite facing some resistance from school principals, school counseling administrators in **District D** advocate for greater alignment with the ASCA National Model to increase role clarity, position counselors to serve as wellness advocates, and ease cross-district collaboration.



Increased Role Clarity

Administrators note that the ASCA National Model helps provide alignment and clear definitions of the roles and responsibilities of school counselors. These guidelines help school counselors more efficiently manage their time and benchmark their tasks to standardized priorities.



Greater Counselor Leadership Responsibilities

The model's guidelines place school counselors in more of a leadership role within their buildings, especially in the area of student social-emotional learning. This leadership role allows counselors more opportunities to institutionalize social-emotional student supports. School counselors help develop curriculum and classes on counseling standards and work with the principal to manage student wellness.



Easier District-Wide Collaboration


Greater district-wide standardization and mutual understanding of school counselor roles helps facilitate collaboration. School counselors in different buildings can more easily coordinate student support between buildings and across grades when their roles and responsibilities are clearly established.

District-Wide Counselor Team Meetings Provide Coordination and Professional Support

School counselors at all levels in **District A** and **District C** meet regularly to coordinate counseling services and support each other.

Administrators at District C organize teachers and school officials district-wide into professional learning communities. Teachers and/or school staff with similar roles meet to collaborate on common goals, identify barriers to student achievement, and promote professional development and learning opportunities. The district releases students early every Monday to provide a time each week for these professional learning communities to meet. As a professional learning community, school counselors from elementary, middle, and high schools across the district meet every Monday for one hour.

During these meetings, counselors discuss the counseling curriculum, review student progress, and share resources for counseling instruction. Periodically throughout the year, counselors use these Monday meetings to evaluate policies, standards, and other documentation used to guide counseling across the district.



Counselor Team Meetings Promote Counselor Collaboration and Improve Morale

Counselors in **District A** emphasize the importance of team-wide meetings. Most counselors in the district serve as the only school counselor in their school. District-wide meetings provide opportunities for counselors to support each other and collaborate on difficult issues. Counselors in the district also use these meetings to develop standardized frameworks and approaches to new and emerging problems.

Student Assistance Team Meetings Systematically Identify and Track At-Risk Students

School counselors in **District C** participate in weekly hour-long meetings for the building's Student Assistance Team. The team always includes a coordinator, a building administrator (e.g., school principal, dean of students), instructional coach, school psychologist, and a school counselor. Depending on a student's situation, the team invites other school officials to provide input. For example, general education teachers will attend meetings for students experiencing academic issues, and the school nurse will attend for health-related issues.

In these weekly meetings, the team reviews at-risk students and students receiving interventions. Team members quickly evaluate data collected regarding a student's intervention and other indicators

Student Assistance Team Membership



Building Administrator



School Counselor



School Psychologist



Instructional Coach



Team Coordinator



Additional Members as Needed

of student success during these meetings. The data assessment and discussion lasts only two or three minutes per student to allow the team to cover each student's progress at least once every six weeks. This assessment and discussion serve to summarize the data and recommend next steps. These next steps may include ending, continuing, or changing an intervention.

Parents are also a part of the Student Assistance Team process. If they are unable to attend the meeting, the Student Assistant Team Coordinator will inform parents of the discussion and actions taken during the meeting.

Administration

Elementary and Middle School Counselors Work Closely with School Principals

School counselors work closely with school principals to assess student wellness, address behavioral issues, and respond to student crises. Administrators estimate that elementary school principals in **District C** collaborate with the school counselor more than nearly any other school official. Principals and counselors frequently work together to establish interventions for behavioral issues.

Elementary and middle school principals in **District A** track student behavior and consult with school counselors regarding student discipline. Students with behavioral referrals or disciplinary issues may have social-emotional issues that cause these disruptive behaviors. Principals and school counselors frequently meet to discuss students who exhibit worrisome behaviors. Counselors then connect with these students to identify issues and provide interventions as needed.

District Administrators Help Organize and Coordinate School Counseling Programs

School counselors at most profiled districts report directly to school principals. However, three profiled districts also feature administrators who oversee and coordinate school counseling services across their districts. A district administrator at **District D** oversees, develops, and structures all of the district's tiered academic, behavioral and social-emotional supports. The administrator works with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) teams in each building, which include school counselors. This administrator helps organize professional development, standardize database processes, and support school counselors in their roles.

At **District C**, the Student Services Director oversees school counselors across the district. This oversight includes district-wide coordination of the school counseling curriculum and facilitating communication between counselors.

The Director of Student Services at **District E** helps coordinate three elementary school counselors and two student services counselors shared between the middle and high school. Three counselors at the high school and two counselors at the middle school do not fall under the coordination of the district's Department of Student Services.

Job Descriptions Describe School Counselors as Comprehensive Wellness Resources

Job descriptions for school counseling positions require applicants to fulfill responsibilities in many dimensions of student wellness and success. Most profiled job descriptions state that a school counselor holds responsibilities for academic, college, and career advising, social-emotional counseling, and participating in mental health and behavioral support teams.

At **District A**, the school counseling team developed proposal language to update their district's school counselor job description. This updated language helps to describe the roles and responsibilities of school counselors in the district. Counselors referenced the ASCA National Model to develop their proposed language.

See **Appendix B** for a selection of school counselor job descriptions from districts in and around Wyoming.

● **Proposal Job Description at *District A***

Job Objective or Duties and Responsibilities:

1. The School Counselor creates and maintains a comprehensive school counseling program based on the ASCA School Counseling Model, as well as the district's counseling program's vision and mission statements, program goals, and student and professional competencies.
2. The School Counselor incorporates assessments and tools that are concrete, clearly defined, and reflective of the school's needs.
3. The School Counselor promotes academic growth resulting in graduation.
4. The School Counselor provides services to students, parents, school staff, and the community, which may include a structured guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and support systems (e.g., referrals, consultation, collaboration).
5. The School Counselor gathers and analyzes school and school counseling program data to show the impact of the school counseling program on student achievement, attendance, and behavior.

Job Qualifications:

1. At least those qualifications in education, training, and experiences that meet the requirements of the state Department of Education for the position.
2. Such other qualifications determined appropriate at the time of appointment.

7) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member district approached the Forum with the following questions:

- What resources do administrators at contact districts use to design their school counseling services?
- Do contact districts consult a standardized counseling model?
- What trends and changes in the roles and duties of school counselors do administrators at contact districts identify?
- How do contact districts gain buy-in from counselors to embrace changing duties and expectations?
- How many school counselors do contact districts employ to serve students at elementary, middle, and high school levels?
- What is the ratio of students per counselor at contact districts?
- What administrative and reporting structures do contact districts use to manage school counseling services?
- What are the duties, responsibilities, and expectations of school counselors at contact districts?
- How do contact districts design job descriptions to describe these duties and responsibilities?
- How do the duties, responsibilities, and expectations of school counselors vary depending on the age of students served?
- Do school counselors at contact districts focus on specific counseling areas, or do counselors hold responsibilities that span multiple counseling domains?
- Are administrators at contact districts satisfied with their school counseling service model?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

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Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed school counselors, or where applicable, district administrators who oversee school counselors at the following districts

A Guide to Districts Profiled in this Brief

District	State	Approximate Enrollment
District A	Wyoming	1,200
District B	Ohio	4,900
District C	Nebraska	3,400
District D	Wyoming	2,500
District E	Wyoming	2,600

Appendix A. K-5 School Counseling Standard Rubric Template

K-5 School Counseling		
Topic: Acquire skills for improving learning and achieving school success		
Score 4.0	<p>In addition to score 3.0 performance, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications that go beyond what was taught.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student continuously shows that he/she works hard and doesn't give up. 	
	<i>Score 3.5</i>	<i>In addition to score 3.0 performance, partial success at score 4.0 content</i>
Score 3.0	<p>The student will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work alone, with a partner, or with a group 	
	<i>Score 2.5</i>	<i>No major errors or omissions regarding score 2.0 content, and partial success at score 3.0 content</i>
Score 2.0	<p>Student will recognize or recall specific vocabulary, such as: K-5: Self-control; responsible; put first things first. Student can name ways to be a good student.</p> <p>There are no major errors or omissions regarding the simpler details and processes as the student: However, the student exhibits major errors or omissions regarding the more complex ideas and processes.</p>	
	<i>Score 1.5</i>	<i>Partial success at score 2.0 content, and major errors or omissions regarding score 3.0 content</i>
Score 1.0	With help, partial success at score 2.0 content and score 3.0 content	
	<i>Score 0.5</i>	<i>With help, partial success at score 2.0 content but not at score 3.0 content</i>

Appendix B. School Counselor Job Descriptions

EAB researchers identified the following job descriptions from public job postings surveyed between March 12th, 2018 and March 27th, 2018.

Elementary School Counselor	
State	Wyoming
Title	School Counselor
Level	Elementary
Nature and Scope Of Job:	A school counselor implements and manages programs designed for the academic, career and personal/social development of elementary and secondary students. He/she practices under the general direction of the building principal.
Essential Functions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assists students to acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span. 2. Assists students to complete school with the academic preparation essential in choosing from a wide range of postsecondary options. 3. Assists students to understand the relationship of academics to the world of work, life at home, and in the community. 4. Assists students in acquiring skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and making informed career decisions. 5. Assists students to employ strategies in achieving future career success and satisfaction. 6. Assists students in understanding the relationship between personal qualities, education, training and the world of work. 7. Assists students in acquiring the attitudes, knowledge, and interpersonal skills that help them understand and respect self and others. 8. Assists students in making decisions, setting goals, and taking necessary action to achieve goals. 9. Assists students in understanding safety and survival skills.
Other Functions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assumes legal responsibility for the supervision of students on school property or in attendance at a school sponsored activity. 2. Assumes individual responsibilities which may be assigned by the principal and which may relate to committee work, student activities, student supervision, or other planning and professional assignments. 3. Maintains records as required by law, school district policy, and administrative regulation. 4. Conducts oneself in accordance with professional and ethical standards. 5. Will avail oneself of professional development opportunities in areas of critical need. 6. Takes necessary and reasonable precautions to protect students, equipment, materials, and facilities. 7. Follows all school district policies and procedures. 8. Performs other duties as assigned by the building principal.
Knowledge, Skills, and Mental Ability:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Possess a knowledge of Public Law 101-476 (I.D.E.A.), Rules and Regulations governing students with disabilities in Wyoming public schools and local rules and regulations. 2. Possess knowledge of Section 504 of ADA. 3. Possess knowledge of basic computer applications. 4. Possess the ability to follow and give complete written and oral directions. 5. Possess the ability to work in diverse populations. 6. Possess the ability to write reports of a technical nature.
Education, License, Certification, or Formal Training:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proper certification issued by the Wyoming Department of Education for position of School Counselor, or Licensure issued by the Wyoming Mental Health Professional Licensing Board. 2. A minimum of a Master's Degree awarded from an accredited college or university in a related field.

Junior High School Counselor	
State	Wyoming
Title	Guidance Counselor
Level	Junior High
Job Goal:	To help students overcome problems that impede learning and to assist them in making educational, occupational, and life plans that hold promise for their personal fulfillment as mature and responsible men and women.
Performance Responsibilities:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrates effective communication skills in communicating with students, parents, staff and administrators. 2. Provides individual and group counseling and guidance that leads students to increased personal growth, self-understanding, and maturity. 3. Organizes and oversees the administration of achievement tests, and provides feedback to students and parents on the results of those tests. 4. Oversees the placement and follow up of each student in the areas of core and elective classes. 5. Assists in the construction of the master schedule. 6. Monitors a parent/student directed grade check system. 7. Orchestrates a well-organized record keeping system in the areas of registration, schedule changes, progress reports and change of schedule petitions as required by law, school district policy, and administrative regulations. 8. Represents the school in special education parent conferences. 9. Provides individual crisis counseling and developmental counseling referred by teachers, parents, administrators, or the student himself. 10. Develops a pro-active approach to school social work by assisting classroom instruction in self-understanding and self-growth. 11. Provides a resource for classroom teachers in any and all areas that concern human behavior. 12. Demonstrates a knowledge of Federal laws for students with disabilities such as I.D.E.A. and Section 504, Rules and Regulations Governing Students With Disabilities in Wyoming Public
Supervises:	Guidance Secretary
Reports to:	Principal
Qualifications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Certificate or license 2. Master's Degree 3. One calendar year of experience outside the field of education. 4. Two years classroom teaching or administrative experience in a school setting. 5. Such alternatives to the above qualifications as the Board may find appropriate and acceptable.

High School Counselor	
State	Colorado
Title	School Counselor
Level	High School
Position Summary:	The School counselor will provide support and advising services to assist Sheridan secondary students with college access, career planning and/or career awareness activities. This position works predominantly with the college readiness team at their own school, but will also coordinate bridging efforts between the middle and high school for postsecondary readiness with supplemental support to additional schools. They will work to collaborate and align with school administrators, school counselors, college personnel, and members of community organizations. The Counselor will also work with students and postsecondary readiness teams to develop Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAPs) for students. Support will include trainings throughout the year, a college-access curriculum, and multiple mentors across the district.
Essential Duties and Responsibilities:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supports students in college and career advisement and programming. 2. Works with behavior and mental health team to develop systems to help students with social emotional supports to promote academics. 3. Works with leadership team to develop systems that balance student academic success strategies with social emotional support strategies 4. Educates students and parents about careers and colleges, the college admissions process, trends, procedures, and testing; and helps students and families aspire realistically and choose wisely. 5. Meets with students, individually and in groups, to talk about process and individual college/career choices. 6. Provides information about various types of financial aid and scholarships, and provides assistance with the completion of applications for financial aid. 7. Utilizes the ICAP and support systems to automate a series of touch points to remind students of important tasks. 8. Establishes and maintains effective working relationships with coworkers, students, and partners. 9. Supports and promotes other post-secondary initiatives within the school. 10. Supports post-secondary office tasks and data entry. 11. Other duties as assigned.
Position Requirements	<u>Education and Experience</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Master's degree in school-based counseling 2. United States driver's license and reliable transportation to travel between schools during the work day 3. Excellent written and verbal communication skills, strong organizational ability and the ability to meet deadlines. 4. Bilingual Spanish preferred but not required.
Reports to:	Principal
Supervises:	None

K-12 School Counselor	
State	Idaho
Title	K-12 Guidance Counselor
Level	K-12
Job Description:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will be responsible for guiding individual and groups of students through the development of educational, personal, and career plans 2. Counseling individuals and small groups of children 3. Consulting with and training teachers, parents, and staff regarding children's needs 4. Referring children with problems and their parents to special programs, specialists, and outside agencies 5. Participating in activities which contribute to the effective operation of the school 6. Planning and evaluating the counseling program 7. Pursuing continuous professional growth 8. Other duties as assigned by the building administrator and/or director of counseling.
Major Duties & Responsibilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assist students with educational planning, course selection, and adding and dropping courses. 2. Develop individual four (4) year plans with eighth graders and students newly enrolling, and assist in monitoring and managing these plans. 3. Assist with registration of new students. 4. Interpret grades and test scores for parents and students, as well as permanent record information such as GPA & credit status. 5. Assist when requested with follow-up on students that are below grade level/failing with progress reports. 6. Assist with the resolution of school related problems. 7. Provide responsive services including consultation, personal counseling, crisis counseling, and referral. 8. Assist with teacher/student/parent conferences as necessary. 9. Maintain student records and ensure confidentiality. 10. Consult with teachers and staff regularly to provide information regarding emerging needs of students. 11. Screen and coordinate new student records. 12. Build the master secondary schedule and register students. 13. Use the internet to gather current information about colleges and career programs. 14. Coordinate and supervise the district testing program. 15. Participate in building meetings as appropriate. 16. Perform other duties as assigned.
Qualifications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Holds a Pupil Personnel Services Certificate with a Counselor Endorsement (K-12) 2. Excellent public relations and communications skills 3. Excellent organizational skills 4. Able to work under pressure and deadlines 5. Maintains confidentiality 6. Knowledge of master scheduling (preferred) 7. Knowledge of state and federal testing procedures and requirements (preferred) 8. Strong background in the use of technology 9. Relates extremely well to students 10. Works well with all staff members 11. Citizenship, residency, or work visa in the United States required